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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: In the first display of cooperation in some time between the militant and moderate factors of the Buddhist Church, the progovernment bonze Tam Chau and the militant faction led by Tri Quang have separately requested a cease-fire for the anniversary of Buddha's birthday on 23 May 1967.

Although Buddhist leaders have made similar requests in the past, Buddha's birthday has never been the occasion of a formal truce. The request by the militant faction this year hints at an effort to obtain an extended cease-fire, [and]

[is the first step in a plan by Tri Quang to try to bring about peace negotiations.]

Thich Tam Chau reportedly issued his communiqué to prevent the militant faction from reaping the benefits that such an appeal may have within the Vietnamese and international Buddhist movement.

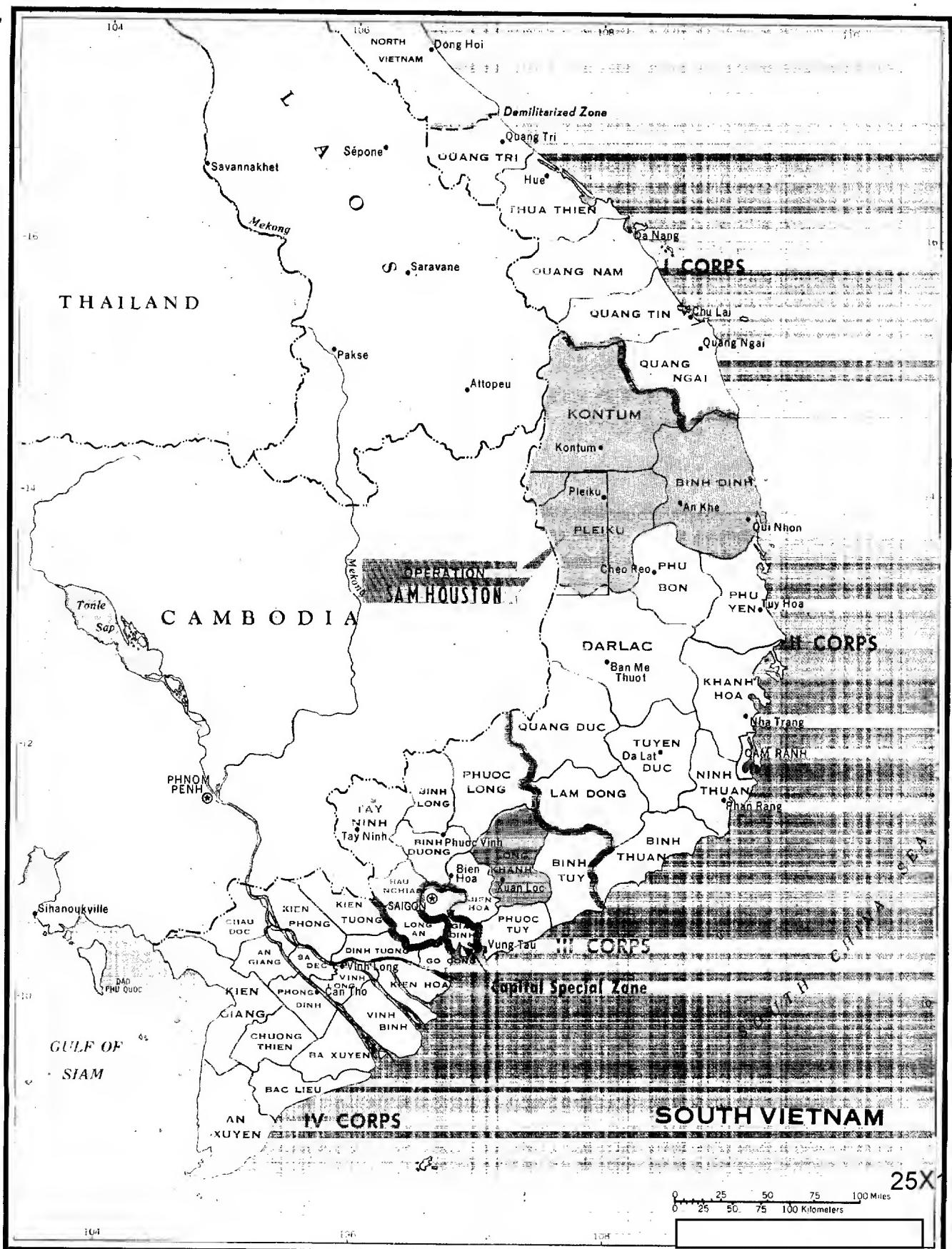
Reports have begun to come in from the provinces indicating Viet Cong plans to disrupt the village and hamlet elections scheduled to begin early next month. The initial Liberation Front radio commentary on the upcoming elections occurred on 6 March, and reflected expected Viet Cong opposition, including a call for the elections to be "smashed." The Communist attitude is similar to their position on last year's Constituent Assembly elections, indicating that they probably will attempt to disrupt the elections wherever possible.

Although the elections are less than a month away, there have been some indications that the government is still working hard to encourage qualified persons to stand for office and that many of the candidates to date are members of existing village councils or present hamlet officials. Increased enthusiasm for the elections may be generated, however, as the balloting approaches.

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Military Situation in South Vietnam: Although there have been no reports of significant military contact in the past 24 hours, delayed reports of action in the past few days indicate that the present aggressive Communist posture in I Corps and north of Saigon has also been prevalent elsewhere. On 20 and 21 March, enemy forces in company and battalion strength were committed against US or ARVN units in Binh Dinh and Long Khanh provinces and against troops conducting Operation SAM HOUSTON which covers parts of Pleiku and Kontum provinces.

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Sierra Leone: The military remains in control while political leaders search for a solution of the postelection crisis.

An uneasy calm continues in the capital. Incumbent Prime Minister Margai's prospects have been enhanced by declarations of support for his party by 10 of the 12 paramount chiefs elected to the Parliament on 21 March. A number of political combinations are still possible, however, among them a broad coalition led by some other leader from Margai's party.

If a settlement acceptable to army commander Lansana and the major political forces is not reached soon, prospects for widespread violence and a complete take-over by the army will increase.

NOTE

USSR-Austria: Moscow continues to express strong objections to an Austrian association with the Common Market and to put off Austria's request for surface-to-air missiles. During his visit to Russia from 14 to 21 March, Chancellor Klaus was told again that neither objective is compatible with the 1955 Austrian State Treaty or with Austria's political neutrality. Soviet opposition to EEC affiliation for Austria stems from a fear that it would be tantamount to a second anschluss with West Germany.

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